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tle while, dear God, a few brief days,
y thee, let me keep this love of mine
in my inmost heart, safe from the world!
lear, too deep, it lies for earthly gaze.
A few brief days!

A little while, ch. grant the boon I ask,
For none can ever know save heart divine
How life's environments have bound my soul,
Dear God! Oh, say I need not wear my mask
A Jew brief days!

A little while, oh, just a little while, To have and hold the love I've prayed so long! Though dark the way and drear my heart may

smile,
For evernore my life will hold love's shrine,
Though love but linger here
A few brief days!
—Rose VanB. Speece in Scranton Tribune

LA DAME A LA CLEF."

By Walter Littlefield.

"Max O'Rell" through his sketches of and"-French and English life and character; M. Charles P. Lebon, instructor of what impatiently. French, who, by the way, is a litterateur of some little note, and myself. continued M. Lebon smiling. "Simply The conversation, after various fluctu- imagine her beautiful in face and form; ations, had assumed a story telling then, gentlemen, around her neck, drift. M. Blouet had just related an which was of the purest mold, was amusing anecdote of his Boston so- riveted a golden chain to which was journ, and we were silently puffing in attached this key. And, gentlemen, that agreeable languor that arises from from the 1st of June, 1848, to the day a good weed and a good story.

On drawing his cardease from his of her death the chain never left her pocket M. Lebon brought forth a small | neck, nor the key." bright object that glistened a second in the lamplight as it fell to the floor. He stooped for it with rather undue haste: with so much haste, in fact, that he called our attention to a movement that otherwise would have passed un-

"What is it?" inquired M. Blouet. Without a word Lebon handed him the object he had dropped, but eyed him carefully as it was examined. "A key," remarked M. Blouet; "a key

and evidently of gold." And he passed

I held in my hand a key of perhaps an inch in length and half as wide. There was nothing particularly remarkable about it unless it were the material of which it was composed, that appeared to be gold. Suddenly my eye caught sight of a date and an inscription upon the ring of the key-'ler Juin, 1848. Memento mori!"

"A curious key," I suggested as I re-turned it to M. Lebon. "Tell us about

The one addressed puffed assiduously for a moment or two as he twirled the mysterious key between his forefinger and thumb, but he made no reply.

"Come, come," said M. Blouet as he leaned forward with interest, "there must be something to tell about a key like that. Why not let us have it?"

"You are right, gentlemen. There is a curious story concerning this key, and since you desire it I will tell it to you, for truly, gentlemen, without exaggera-tion, this little bit of metal that I hold in my hand has one of the most remarkable of histories."

"Tell it! Tell it!" we both exclaimed

Lebon began his story.

fallen. M. Thiers and his party held band pointed to the inscription and the government. Evidences of the terrible commune were on every hand, still the city was beginning to look like the habitation of a civilized people. announced the death at Versailles of a tyrant allowed her to retire to a quiet Paris salons busy concerning a mystery that seemed to surround her. For reasons that I shall presently explain she became known as 'La Dame a la Clef.' Now, a nickname in Paris means a great deal more than it does here. When one is nicknamed there, one car- had been collecting. He produced a ries that name to the grave.

mentioned 'La Dame a la Clef est pers. To my astonishment, he drew morte.' It did not give her own name. from his pocket the mysterious key and paper concluded by saying that she died, aged 45, in complete solitude. It back.

seems that her husband, who was much

older than she, had visited her regularly every six months during the past ten years and then had disappeared, no one knew where. All was mysterious about this 'Lady of the Key.' One day came to her the news of her husband's death. She survived him but a short time, and it was whispered that she had allowed herself to die from hunger. That was all the notice of her death had to say about the matter. The mystery still remained unexplained, and the interest concerning her grew less and less and gradually died away altogether."

M. Lebon paused to relight his cigarette, which he had allowed to go out. After doing this, he settled back in his chair, puffed once or twice, but did not seem at all inclined to continue the

"Well," I ejaculated, "go on. That is no story. Why, you haven't even said what the mystery was, or why she was called 'La Dame a la Clef.'

"Ah, yes," he replied pensively. "quite right. I had forgotten. Gentlemen, I have not said that she was There were three of us one evening beautiful, yet such was the case. Her in the reading room of the Press club face was one of the loveliest that I -M. Paul Blouet, better known as have ever seen, her figure was perfect,

"Well?" interrupted M. Blouet some-

"Gentlemen, I will not bore you,"

He paused again and once more seemed disinclined to go on. "Well," said M. Blouet, " we have the

mystery; now for the solving of it." "Gentlemen," continued M. Lebon, smiling sagely as he tipped off the ashes of his cigarette, "I have told you all that anybody but myself knows. Is that not enough? You now know what all Paris knew. Are you not satisfled?" and he laughed quietly to him-

We smoked for a few moments in stlence, both M. Blouet and myself surmising that the best way to hear the rest of the story was to leave the narrator completely to himself. In a moment the latter began again, speaking rapidly and in short sentences.

"In 1848 her husband owned a country house near Passy. She was then young and gay. No chain or key adorned her neck then. One day she was surprised by her lord, shutting somebody in the wardrobe. A servant had betrayed her, The Muscovite Othello turned the key twice in the wardrobe, took it out, then told his wife to follow him. A traveling brizska stood a few paces from the villa. More dead than alive, the unhappy woman obeyed. When the husband had placed her in the carriage he gave an order in a low voice to the coachman. 'Keep this key,' he said to his wife. I have forgotten something and will return,' then went back to the

"He returned, according to his promise, but as the carriage descended the hill the poor woman saw flames issuing from the windows of the villa. She fainted. Three days she remained un-Fresh cigarettes were lighted, and, conscious. On regaining her senses she still holding the key in his hand as if perceived that a gold chain was riveted to bear witness to what he said, M. around her neck, to which was attached a golden key, the exact counterpart "It was in 1871, just after the mirren- of the original, bearing an inscription. der of Paris. The second empire had She wished to kill herself, but her husadded that if she would save her family from dishoner she must ever ob-serve it. She was therefore condemned to live. Her strange necklace excited One morning Le Journal des Debats much curiosity in Paris. At last her Russian lady who for more than 20 retreat on the express stipulation that years had kept all the gossips of the she would not attempt to destroy herself during his lifetime. His death released her from this condition."

Some three weeks later I was calling on my friend Lebon, who wished to show me some old manuscripts that he large box of rosewood, which he casu-"The notice in Le Journal des Debats ally remarked contained his family pa-

"The key?" he interrogated. Then he laughed long and loud. "And you swal-lowed all that," he said when he could control his merriment.

"Certainly," I replied grimly. "By the way, though, it wouldn't make a bad story, would it? I think I will work it up-elaborate it a little,

I left the house feeling deeply mortified to think I had been so effectually "sold." A desire for revenge took possession of me, and I determined to steal a march on him. I have done so .- Cri-

in his hat and the telegraph wire bracelets became too importunate in his demands for cigarettes, and as he had been detected in the act of appropriating a wooden handled skinning knife, valued \$1.50, five minutes before the post trader walked around the counter and kicked him energetically out of the store and half way around the hay corral. It spoke volumes for the post trader's activity that he was able to do this, for it is no easy matter to keep within kicking range of a propto keep within kicking range of a prop-Crow indian for the distance that he covered, to say nothing of performing the act itself. Therefore the post trader was breathless when he returned and had to lie on the striped calico to recover himself. The old bullwhacker, who had been watching the race from his seat on a nail keg, with a grin on his wrinkled mahogany visage, complimented the advance agent of commerce on his

"I wuz suthen of a foot racer myself when I wuz younger an limberer than what I am now," he said, "but I dunno that I ever seen the time that I could have done better than that. I'm regardin it purely as a physical feat, however. I'm not sayin that you showed a strikin amount of jedgment. When Young Man Afraid of His Breechclout has got you knotted up with green rawhide an the squaws are fixing the fire fer the grand barbecue. mebbe you will regret your pernishus activity an cuss the day that you humbled the proud spirit of the noble In-

jun warrior. Is this shebang insured?" "You was never introduced to me." rejoined the post trader. "I've got a feet, an I come into this country from an honust as the day.' the headwaters of Bitter creek along of J. W. Hancher an Ed Phernetton an the rest of them desperadoes. I've got relatives by marriage among the Crows and Ogallalas, an I've drunk more althe big Mizzoura. I didn't bring my

idee his heart is bad, an he won't come to breakfast because you ast him fer time to assist at the funeral. the means of soothin your nerves. You injered that Crow in a sensitive spot,

"I done my best to," said the post trader.

"He may belong to the Badface band an have hair in his tepee," continued the old bullwhacker in the same grave tone of reproof, "but at the same time he's a human, an as a human it's your play to extend the right hand of fellership to him instid of the sole of your number nine. Hain't they got no Sunday school liberries out on Bitter creek? Hain't you never read about the settler who found a poor, starin redskin out in the snow plum exhausted an took him inter his shack an fed him up a whole lot an warmed him an then turned him loose with a grub stake, an when the Two Kettle outfitexhoomed the tomahawk an raised merry Cain scalpin an burnin through

the paleface settlements an the good hearted granger was raked in the In-jun that he had saved sashays has rescoos him from a turr'ble death?" "I've read them stories," said the

"But you don't believe 'em," said the old bullwhacker. "You ain't sanguine concernin the good that there is in your feller man. If you git a bad deal, you decline to chip in an lay down your hand instil of callin fer cards an draw-

in to the ace." "I don't draw to no two spot in the hope of completin a flush."

"Well, my the'ry is that there ain't no galoot so low down but if you treat him with kindness an keep him close herded he will show the good that's in him. Did I ever tell you about old man Haines an Gus Minnick? Well, it goes to prove what I wuz a-sayin. Old man Haines lived out on Blue creek apiece above where it empties into the Platte, opposite the mouth of Ash Hollow, where Harney cleaned up the Sloux. He wuz jest about the most benev'lent old duck that ever ripped up tough sod with a balky team of bulls. Long sufferin wuzn't no pare Long sufferin wuzn't no name

fer him. He had two boys that wuz jest like him, an his ole woman wuz worse'n he wuz.

"One fine, cloudy events Gus Minnick an Todd Blakey comes along an rustles ten head of old man Haines' ponies an wuz hikin south with 'em when they met up with a crowd of inquirin Prairie Dog into Kansas after an onsuccessful pursoot of some north bound oss thieves. The boys had too many brands in their bunch, an one of the stranglers reckernized Blakey, so they tied their feet under their horses' bellies an headed fer the nearest timber. They give Blakey the first swingin an wuz adjustin the grass rope to

"As soon as they explained who they wuz an identerfied their ponies, the boss strangler allowed that there wuzn't no reason why the ceremonies shouldn't perceed, an he throwed the other end of the rope over the limb.

"'Why,' says the old man, 'you hain't goin to hang that poor boy, air you? "'I reckon I am,' says the boss strangler, cheerful an gay.

the ranch with me an surround him with moral influences an keep him out of bad company. He's got good in him, an I'll bring it out of him an make a useful citerzen of him.

Minnick go, an old man Haines started back with him. On the way he talked to Gus like a father an told him how wrong it wuz to rustle cayuses when starter an offered him good wages to work on the ranch.

"Gus stald there fer two months, an then he got inter a argyment with the biggest boy about breakin a colt an slot him up an lit out. Old man Haines hogs; all crops and farming implimenfs wuz real provoked about it, but he \$2,000. jumped on a horse an put out after Minnick an overtook him at Box Elder. As soon as Gus seen him he throwed down on him with a Winchester, but the old man told him to behave himself an quit monkeyin with fire-

"'I sh'd think you'd seen the evil of them sort of actions after killin Hen-

did, says the old man as severe as he knowed how. 'An I sh'd want to look me in the face after sech per month. counter with his head on a bolt of pink actions. All the same, I don't want you stragglin off where you'll get inter bad comp'ny, so you jest come right back home with me. We've got to have them colts broke, an we're short hand-

"Well, Gus knowed how forgivin the payments. old man wuz, an he went back, an they all avoided the subjec' of Henry, so's old woman burned his cakes fer him is a genuine bargain. he brained her with the skillet. The other boy told him that that wuzn't no way to do, an Gus got mad an massacreed him with the butcher knife an

then set fire to the house an lit out. "When old man Haines got back an found out what had happened, he said line; new six-room dwelling; fine water; that it wuz enough to make a man lose young fruit; is a bargain at \$1500. patience, but he wuz sot in his ways, patience, but he wuz sot in his ways, an he said that he would make a good citizen of Gus in spite of hill an high per month. Renting for \$10.75 per water. So he went out after him again | month. an coaxed him back, an everybody said that Gus was a changed man from half inch of callous on the soles of my that time forward, as meek as Moses

"Are they livin there together yet?"

The old bullwhacker took a large chew of tobacco before replying. Then kali water an eat more dog an buffalo he said: "I wuz hopin you wouldn't berry than any white man this side of ast me that question, becuz it might seem to milertate against my the'ry, renting for ten dollars per month. outfit in here in the spring of '99. What | The truth is that the old man sent Gus did you expect me to do - give that to town one day, as Gus come back greasy, tin tagged coyote my stock of with a jug of whisky fer himself, but cigarettes to keep him good tempered?" he forgot the old man's smokin ter-"An if you had you wouldn't have backer. The old man said that it showforfuted his friendship," returned the ed selfishness an ingratitude on Gus' old bullwhacker. "As it is I've got an part, an he allowed that he must be poor material anyway, an he had done an see you no more. An Injun has got the best that he could with him, but his feelin's the same as a white man that settled it. They wuz standin by has, an I reckon you would git hostile the woodpile at the time, an the old if any hombre booted you from blazes man had the ax. I come along jest in

"Still I never took the old man's view. I reckon that Gus jest forgot." -Chicago Record.

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